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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20591

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

February 4, 1970

A70-10

Honorable John H. Shaffer
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20590

Dear Mr. Shaffer:

As an outgrowth of the Board's continuing investigation of the midair collision at Hartford, Connecticut, on January 17, 1970, between two Piper PA-28's (N7442J and N5731F), we have noted a situation adverse to aviation safety which we believe can be rectified by cooperative action on the part of FAA and the operators of the two Hartford airports.

In the cited case, N5731F was operating from Brainard Airport, Hartford, on an instrument instruction local flight, not on a flight plan, and had not established radio communications with any air traffic control facility. N7442J had been operating in accordance with an Instrument Flight Rules flight plan and concomitant air traffic control clearance from the vicinity of Danbury, Connecticut, destined for Brainard Airport. The pilot of N7442J had canceled his IFR flight plan by radio with the Rentschler Airport (East Hartford) control tower about 2 minutes prior to the collision and had been advised to contact Brainard Unicom on 122.8 MHz for landing information. The radio receiver in N7442J was found set on 122.8 MHz, but no call from this aircraft was heard by personnel manning Brainard Unicom.

Weather conditions at the time of the accident, as observed by Rentschler Tower, were, in part: Partial obscuration, estimated ceiling 8,000 broken clouds, 12,000 overcast, visibility 5 miles, haze.

Brainard and Rentschler Airports are less than 2 miles apart. The extended centerlines of the principal runways of each airport cross well within the confines of the control zone, which is based on Rentschler Airport. All traffic on IFR flight plans to or from either airport is handled by Rentschler Tower, which is operated by United Aircraft Corporation. Separation of IFR traffic is provided by Bradley Approach/Departure Control (an FAA facility), with Rentschler Tower serving as an expediting radio communications medium.

In view of this situation, pilots operating to and from Brainard Airport within the Rentschler control zone would gain considerable information concerning possible conflicting air traffic within this control zone by simply maintaining a listening watch on the Rentschler Tower frequency. However, this gain would be negated if these pilots were required to contact Brainard Unicom to determine the landing runway direction.

Therefore, in order to resolve this problem and to provide a source of information which would assist general aviation pilots in determining the location of potentially hazardous traffic, the Board recommends that the following steps be taken by your agency:

1. Effect coordination with the Bureau of Aeronautics of the State of Connecticut to install a private recorded telephone line between Brainard Airport and the FAA TRACON at Bradley Field. This would provide the Bradley Field facility with initial daily information and subsequent changes, as required, concerning the direction of landing at Brainard Airport.

2. Upon completion of the foregoing, include information concerning Brainard Airport landing direction in the ATIS broadcast by Bradley TRACON on the Hartford VOR.

3. Initiate rulemaking action under Part 93 of the FAR's to require pilots to maintain a listening watch on the appropriate Rentschler Tower frequency while they are operating to and from Brainard Airport and within the Rentschler Airport control zone.

It is recognized that the foregoing recommended steps are of a temporary nature, pending the establishment and commissioning of the Brainard FAA control tower. However, we believe that implementation of these recommendations may reduce the potential of another midair collision in that area. Also, consideration should be given to applying these recommendations to other areas having similar problems.

Sincerely yours,

John H. Reed

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Chairman